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LETTER DATED 26 JANUARY 1991 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF TUNISIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF  
THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the speech of  
H.E. Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Tunisian Republic, delivered on  
26 January 1991.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex  
distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ahmed GHEZAL  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

Annex

[Original: Arabic and French]

Speech delivered by the President of the Tunisian Republic  
on 26 January 1991

The destruction and devastation which our brother Iraq is enduring are on the verge of becoming intolerable. Whatever my attitude may be as regards the heart of the problem - an attitude which, moreover, I clearly expressed on 11 August 1990 - I cannot, in any way, accept the turn of events. Actually, Iraq, in all its elements, has become threatened in its very existence.

I need hardly recall that, in my speech of 11 August, I affirmed my opposition to force being used by any party whatsoever to solve the problems. I also expressed the conviction, which is always my conviction, that every problem, however complex it may be, can be solved by peaceful means.

It was my conviction that wisdom, if lacking in one of the parties, cannot be lacking in the community of nations; that the problems of the region, although separated by their origin and their immediate causes, are closely linked by geography and their underlying reasons; and that genuine and lasting solutions are necessarily the fair and comprehensive solutions, even if they require a calendar to be established.

I have therefore spared no effort to avoid what is irreparable. That is why I asked Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, stirred the international conscience and called upon the Security Council to announce the holding, this year, of the International Peace Conference. Iraq is not opposed thereto. This initiative, as any other, ought to have been sufficiently considered and ought to have benefited from the time required for it to be studied in greater depth.

While deploring the obstinacy of certain elements to let the chances for peace go by, I consider it my duty today, faced with the work of Iraq's destruction, to express my profound reprobation of the disastrous developments that conflict with the requirements of peace, human values and the principles on which the United Nations and the Security Council, reputed to be in the service of peace and security, were founded.

I believe that wishing to punish the Iraqi people is a political mistake, an error of judgement. The countries allied against Iraq have hastily applied the resolutions of the Security Council before even exhausting all the peaceful measures.

The date of 15 January, set by the Security Council as opening the way to a possible resort to force in order to induce Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, has become the deadline.

The Security Council resolutions concerned the liberation of Kuwait and not the destruction of Iraq. That clearly shows that the battlefield - if battle it had to be - was not to extend beyond the boundaries of Kuwait. Most of the allied

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forces are in the process of unloading a deluge of fire and the sword on the whole territory of Iraq, on Basra, on Baghdad and on Mosul, thus targeting on the entire civil infrastructure and the entire material and human potential.

Through the non-stop destruction, of which our brother Iraq has been the victim since the dawn of 17 January, the true designs for which the Security Council resolutions were taken advantage of are becoming clear, just as in the same way it has been established since 2 August that international legality was not applied to all in accordance with the same standards and the same criteria.

More than 20 States have formed a coalition to strike Iraq. Is that international legality? That legality which no one has hastened to enforce, except when economic, political and strategic interests depend thereon.

The true aims, which have now become clear, consist in preventing the renaissance of the Arab nation, in prohibiting it from acquiring strength and invulnerability, from making progress and from mastering science and technology so that it will for ever remain condemned to dependence, having no place in this allegedly new world order.

It is distressing how these parties boast about unloading tens of thousands of bombs each day, using the most sophisticated engines of death on the Iraqi people, while the world echoes the cries of indignation when Israel finds itself the target of a resistance operation. But complete silence prevails when a people's potentials are wiped out and when this people is attacked even in its places of worship.

When we witness the ordeal endured by the Iraqi people and, through them, by each and every Arab citizen, we have a duty to ask ourselves: what about human rights and humanitarian law, what about the integrity of the human person and human dignity?

When we see the deceptions perpetrated by the mass media, the withholding and manipulation of information, we have a right to ask ourselves: what about the freedom and credibility of the press, what about these noble values, are they subject to limitations, do they apply to some and not to others, is this the new world order?

Citizens,

While there may be some justification for the way in which some countries use these values to serve their own interests, it is both surprising and repugnant to see Arabs and Muslims remain silent, each according to his own logic and for his own purposes, without a thought for the imperatives of the survival and dignity of the Arab nation as a whole.

Peoples always survive ordeals. We need look no further than the combatant Palestinian people, now stronger than ever despite the deportations, persecutions and genocide attempts that it has endured for half a century.

I appeal to all Arab and Muslim leaders, to all those the world over who love peace and believe in the right of peoples to peace and security, to call on the Security Council to end the war and apply the principles of international law without discrimination or restriction by convening the International Peace Conference in the course of this year with a view to ending the Gulf crisis and solving all the problems of the Middle East and, first and foremost, the problem of the struggling Palestinian people.

The Palestinian cause will remain a permanent source of instability for the entire region until a just and lasting solution is found which guarantees the right of the Palestinians to establish a state on their national soil.

I pledge our solidarity with the fraternal people of Iraq in their harsh ordeal. I am following developments in the situation constantly and am working tirelessly with our brothers in the Arab Maghreb Union, and with all peace- and justice-loving forces, to end this devastating war as soon as possible. In extending my gratitude and high regard to all Tunisians for the maturity and sense of civic duty they have shown in expressing their solidarity with the Iraqi people, I call on them to help me devote all my efforts to finding a solution to this problem, while exercising the utmost vigilance, acting calmly and responsibly, and, in keeping with the centuries-old tradition of hospitality for which we are famous, looking out for the safety and the interests of the foreign residents among us and of all those who are here to contribute to our country's development.

In view of our country's development situation and the adverse effects that this crisis is going to have, I again call on all Tunisians to commit themselves seriously to the task at hand and to redouble their efforts, now that it has become clear to all that the only path to salvation and dignity is self-reliance and that invulnerability and independence can be ensured only by our own efforts.

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